

Words of Life

(March 14, 2007)

Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God.

2 Samuel 6:5-7

King David has just begun to reign as king and has occupied Jerusalem and set up his headquarters there making it the political hub of the nation of Israel. David also desired the city to become the religious center for God's people and was used mightily by God to unite the people politically and spiritually. In order for that to happen, the ark of the covenant which had been resting in Kirjath Jearim for many years needed to be brought to Jerusalem. David knew that the ark needed to be brought into the city, so he ordered a cart to be made specially for the transport. The ark was to be placed on the new cart and then guided to Jerusalem as part of a festive processional. The celebration was massive! David assembled 30,000 choice men of Israel to participate and people came from all over the country to witness the event. There was singing and dancing and jubilation fit for a grand and royal party. Then, all of a sudden, disaster struck. The oxen pulling the cart on which the ark had been placed stumbled and one of the men, Uzzah, put out his hand to keep the ark from sliding off the cart and falling to the ground. As soon as Uzzah's hand touched the ark he was struck dead by the Lord. I can't imagine the silence that must have followed. The singing and dancing stopped. The musicians stopped. The people were taken aback as their state of jubilation turned to fear. The mood shift would have been abrupt and drastic.

This is a sobering account. David had all the right intentions. Everything seemed to be going well. All the external indicators pointed to a good thing happening. But everything was not going well in God's eyes. And the reason things did not go well is given for us in 1 Chronicles 15:13 where David himself declared concerning the event "the LORD our God broke out against us, because we did not consult Him about the proper order." Had David inquired of the Lord, he would have been reminded of the Levitical requirement that only the sons of Kohath were permitted to transport the ark with poles made specifically for that purpose. The consequences of David's oversight proved tragic.

This passage teaches us that the manner in which we do the Lord's work can actually be more important than the work itself. It is clear that it was God's will for the ark to end up in Jerusalem because after this tragedy, David goes about it the proper way and the ark is brought safely into the city. But in this incident, the accomplishment of God's will came to an abrupt halt due to the improper manner in which His work was being done. And King David zeroes in on the root cause when he recognized he had neglected to inquire of the Lord prior to launching headfirst into his own action plan. In his zeal to move forward for the Lord he neglected the important aspect of praying and waiting.

The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:63

I remember once being a supervisor in a particular place of work where a staffing reduction needed to be made. Ugh! After doing all the assessment and praying I knew who the person was that needed to be “set free”. I dreaded having the fateful discussion. I really hate doing that kind of thing so I prayed hard for several days and waited it out to see how God would answer. I knew “what” I was supposed to do, I just didn’t know “how” to go about it in the best way to insure minimal hurt on everyone involved. So I asked God to help me know “how” to have this discussion and “when” the right timing would be. Then the most amazing thing happened. This person came into my office one day and said that they felt they were supposed to leave the organization. How amazing is that? Our God is so incredible!

Now, I don’t believe God will always act in that way. There are times He desires us to have a more “hands on” involvement because He wants to teach us in that way. However, I firmly believe that if we learn to pray specifically and according to the manner He has shown us in Scripture, then wait until we hear His voice before proceeding, He will amaze us with His detailed assistance on how to go about it.

I have also found from my experiences that if I wait patiently for Him while seeking His way, sometimes He will bless me by doing all the work for me so I don’t have to do a thing!

Please remember to ask the “how” as well as the “what” question as you take your concerns to the Lord. He will delight you in showing you the path as well as the destination. And sometimes, He may even step in and do the work for you if you give him the opportunity.

Blessings to you as you seek His will and His way this week!

Pastor Ted.